



# COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER is published six times a year by Community Service, Inc. Our purpose is to promote the small community as a basic social institution involving organic units of economic, social and spiritual development.

## the farm

by Ariel Rubissow

*Ariel Rubissow prepared this report for the Newsletter during her 2-week visit to The Vale and Community Service in mid-August. She made use of the office library and files to augment research she is doing to complete a thesis on intentional communities. Ariel is a senior at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.*

At the end of May I travelled south to Tennessee. The sweet smell of blossoming flowers filled the air. The Virginia mountains opened their blue-green arms to the flat plains around Nashville. Summertown was hard to find; the "Farm," where I was headed, lay on the outskirts of the town, marked only by a small sign.

The Farm was the first of a series of visits on a research trip that lasted the whole summer of 1980. I had been studying Human Ecology. I hoped that by visiting some "alternative communities" I might ascertain whether ideas like human-scaled business, appropriate technology, ecological and organic farming, etc., actually worked when they were put into practice. The best way, I felt, of urging society towards more ecological and humanly acceptable lifestyles was to set an example. Sermonizing on the evils of modern industrialism and capitalism while driving a new car, smoking cigarettes and attending an Ivy League college seemed less constructive.

My approach to Farm life was not that of the nosy reporter or the avid student. I attempted to simply exist there and experience life

as it came to me. In other words, I felt that digging around asking vast numbers of untimely questions was not the best way of getting a feeling for the place. Therefore what I have written here is only some impressions from participation in life there.

The gatehouse stands beyond a huge wire gate--open most of the time--at the edge of a dirt road. This brick house with a large veranda lies about a mile and a half from the main bulk of the Farm. This keeps visitors from disturbing the balance of community life and successfully filters the 1,000 of us who arrive every week. All the visitors stay at the gatehouse in two large rooms upstairs or at a small campsite one hundred yards down the road. There is a special room for "baby couples." Because they regard life as sacred, the Farm encourages pregnant women--married, attached or alone--to come to the Farm and have their babies free of charge. A woman can come as much in advance of the expected birthdate as she desires. The mother is schooled in natural, spiritual birthing methods and has her baby--without drugs or machines--in the presence of an experienced midwife. If the mother doesn't want the child, the Farm will provide it with food, clothing, schooling and a loving home for as long as the child needs it, completely free of charge. The mother may return and take it back whenever she likes or leave it there indefinitely. I should add that pregnant women are some of the most respected and pampered individuals in the community.

When I arrived at the gatehouse there were two "baby couples" staying there. One was a boy of sixteen and a girl of fifteen who had run away from home. She was wanted by the police. He already had two illegitimate children. Seven or eight other people were sitting on the veranda. I was steered into the main room by someone who had expected me, as I had written ahead. A young, dark, long-haired man began a kind of screening, scrutinizing and searching process. He asked me why I had come, what were my interests, background and intentions, how long I wanted to stay, if I was willing to work and several deeper questions that brought out things about my personality and values. Altogether we were talking on and off for several hours. Keeping you there, at loose ends for a long period of time, is part of the filtering policy. It gives them time to observe you in action and test your patience. No one is turned away but they are quick to ask you to leave if you're not working hard enough or you're complaining too much.

Visitors and prospective inhabitants or 'soakers' are not allowed to leave the Farm during their stay. The Farm is quite adamant about this. It protects the small town of Summertown from too many strangers and helps them keep track of who is on the Farm. Soakers are asked not to engage in any consuming relationships during their first four or five months. This allows them to fall in love with the Farm before anyone else. There is no smoking, alcohol or drugs. Stephen Gaskin, their leader, was once jailed for a year along with two other members for the cultivation of marijuana on Farm property. They do not want this to happen again.

The Farm has 1300 people, 800 of which are children. The community has existed for ten years. The land covers 1,750 acres, 100 acres are cultivated on the Farm, 250 are sharecropped in the surrounding area. Most of the Farm is forested; most of the fields are planted and productive; most of the food they eat is home-grown. The Farm is vegetarian to the extent of not wearing leather and not even eating dairy animal products (cheese and milk) or eggs. Horses, wildlife and a few dogs and cats are the only animals on the property. Housing is for the most part in makeshift cabins or in old schoolbuses which are beautifully refitted inside with kitchens, curtains and cushions. Houses and buses are laid out along streets like suburban homes, each with its own plot. The likeness to suburbia ends there, however. All the land is communal. Everyone is welcome in

every home. Many domestic tasks are shared and the feeling of community is strong. A few larger houses are scattered amongst the trees. The most permanent buildings are workplaces and small industries. There is a feeling of material poverty. Farm membership requires a pledge of peasanhood and the relinquishment of all material wealth and property to the communal fund. This has been one of its most widely criticized practices for obvious reasons. It goes against the grain of the whole American system.

The site itself is rather beautiful, consisting of green, rolling, lush, leafy hills saturated with soft peace and quiet. A stream and its rocks bedded ravine cut the property in half. The occasional pool is perfect for bathing as long as its not mosquito season. Buildings string along a network of roads often hidden amongst the tangled trees. The air is wonderfully soft. At night fireflies make a milky way of the soybean fields.

People on the Farm dress alike. I realized how much hairstyle visually distinguishes people from one another. When I tried to describe someone there it was always the same physical description. Long hair in braids, sometimes beaded or woven with ribbons, tie-dyed T-shirts, jeans and Indian dresses, rubber sandals, no jewelry (a sign of wealth), no make-up and often glasses. The children all have long hair too. It was disconcerting to greet my first parent with "Isn't she pretty," and be told the child's name was Chester. Many of the children have unusual or biblical names like Emmanuel, Zechariah, Moses, Delilah and Uriah.

My first work experience at the Farm consisted of eight hours in the heavy sun squashing Colorado potato beetles by hand in the tomato fields (the beetles don't discriminate). They do not believe in pesticides. In general the Farm seeks to live by ecological principles in harmony with nature. They recycle almost everything; all waste food and human waste is used for compost, and they are researching and developing alternative energy sources. Almost all their homes are built from scraps ('scam' they call it). A Fuller style dome being built for a meeting house is made completely of materials scavanged from a gym that was being torn down. Despite the emphasis on ecological awareness and practices, I was struck by some stark contradictions. For example: though they don't use pesticides they do use fertilizers (not necessarily of an organic nature);

though they try hard to keep detrimental wastes out of their environment they use Ajax dish-washing detergent and powder in large quantities; though they have enumerable bicycles, short distances to walk, and are well versed on the evils of the automobile, lots of members drive around the Farm in old gas-guzzling pickup trucks. Throughout my stay Farm people extolled the virtues of soy-milk, water and herb tea and exhibited a profound distaste for artificial beverages. One day at work in the soybean fields, however, I was handed a bottle of TAB to quench my thirst. No one fluttered an eyelash.

Work on the Farm has no accounting system. There are crew leaders for every work area. They solicit workers when necessary. Some of the crews are fairly established, others are not. The diversity of areas in which one can work is refreshing: Book publishing, clinics, midwifery, cooking, computer technology, farming, yeast company, mechanics, radio and musical recording and playing, solar electronics, print shop, library, post office, general store, legal office, horse barn and many more. I was impressed with the variety of opportunities available. They refuse to bring in any outside skilled help, feeling it detracts from learning and educational potential within the community.

The Farm has evolved past the stage of needing all its members working purely for subsistence. At least forty different work areas are listed in their phone directory. Work on the Farm seems to get done without anyone rigidly keeping track of who works when and how much. Perhaps this is just part of their spiritual and physical commitment to the community.

There is a vision, a spirituality and a religion at the Farm. It's a self-proclaimed religious community, a religion of awareness of an astral level in all existence, a consciousness of telepathy, an attunement with nature and what is natural, and a regard for the sacredness of life in all its forms. Without a doubt this overall spirituality provides the Farm with a guidance, purpose and unity that is very important. It is not Christian, Catholic, Buddhist or any of the long list of noted religions. More than anything it is a vision of a good, happy, healthy world which we must all work toward. The 'working' is one of the strongest spiritual aspects of the Farm. "Make work a meditation," someone once said. Stephen Gaskin is their leader/teacher/guru and prophet. A religious teacher, preaching peace and love

in the sixties, he describes himself as "a truly ambiguous hippy." The Farm was originally started by Stephen and 200 of his followers.

Every Sunday a special silence pervades over the Farm and everyone goes to an early morning meditation held often at sunrise. There is a special meditation hill, bordered on three sides by the deepest part of the stream's valley. Meditation envelopes everyone for one or two hours. Towards the end Stephen begins an "OHM" which every voice takes up; everyone becomes a part of a rising, reverberating, echoing sound, a wave length that lifts and conveys one round and around the ravine and through each individual's spirit.

After meditation Stephen "raps" about various issues and ideals, sometimes taking the form of a teaching or coaching session. The day I shared in the meeting he talked about the economy: how even though in the sheltered, protected, harmonious life at the Farm things seemed to be fairly stable, the western economy "out there" was shaking and uncertain. He urged members of the outlying Farms (there are 7-10 satellite Farms scattered around the country) to come back to Tennessee so that all their resources and energy could be pooled to prepare for the coming depression. Later he talked about his recent visit to Guatemala where, in the missionary spirit, Farm members are teaching the natives about soy and building a soy dairy. The conversation turned to internal issues and there followed a general gripe and information dissemination session in which everyone participated.

I left the Farm after a week there. Although I had intended to stay longer, I had California fever and wanted to go West. I also was beginning to feel ill from the strict soy-diet and the crowded conditions at the gatehouse. It requires quite a physical and mental adjustment to get used to life on the Farm. However, throughout my travels to other communities, the Farm stood out as a strong, established and fruitful example of alternative living. Though not perfect, I feel it holds tremendous viability for the future, made possible to a large extent by the energy, optimism and charisma of its inhabitants.



# Ohio Communities

by Jane Folmer

A recent visit to several intentional communities proved to be an enlightening and encouraging experience. My overall reaction was one of optimistic enthusiasm for what people are doing and trying to do. I was impressed with the variety of development and intent which was represented and is no doubt present throughout the communities movement. Ray Olds, a friend and long-time Community Service member, was instrumental in arranging the trip and in seeing that we found the elusive communities that are tucked away amongst the picturesque ridges and valleys of southeastern Ohio.

Our first stop was at Sunflower Farm near Amesville to talk with Pete Hill who is a former Yellow Springs resident and Community Service staff person. Although working on last minute details of a weekend workshop scheduled to begin that evening, Pete was most generous with his time and helpful in explaining the progress of the intentional community he and others are planning. While living temporarily at Sunflower Farm, he and a select number of friends are forming the initial intentional family "clump" that will hopefully lead to an intentional community of family clumps.

Contacts made through their work with the Federation of Ohio River Coops and FORC's Communities Committee has led to a group of about 30 people interested in creating a new community. The workshop was designed to facilitate the forming of household clumps by helping to clarify the goals and priorities of the individuals involved as well as of the potential community. Their intent is to create a primarily rural community of stable households and support groups large enough to be materially self-sufficient in its basic needs. They will attempt to retain the urban values of diversity in activity and culture by encouraging variety in the structure and life-style of the individual clumps.

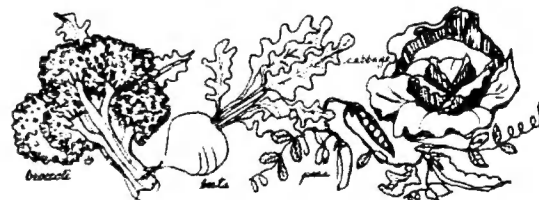
We also had the opportunity to speak at some length with Bruce Sabel, who originally purchased the land at Sunflower Farm and has devoted much time and energy to developing an intentional community there. Five families have bought five acre sections and built homes, with three sections still available. A family from Philadelphia was visiting while we were there

and shared with us their interest in living in a non-religious, family-oriented community, either Sunflower Farm or a community much like it.

The Sunflower members are still very much in the process of working out the details of the community's structure. In fact, they see it as a continuous process of change and adaptation to the needs of the members. At present the families are autonomous socially and financially. Sharing and cooperation is centered mostly in the activities involving their 50 acres of common land which supports a community garden, storage and work buildings and the necessary equipment. Additional cooperative ventures are arranged as they are needed and desired, sometimes, but not always, involving all the members.

Most of the income-producing work is done outside the farm, though one man does some stained glass work there, and there are plans to expand the woodworking facility. The Sunflower families with children are active in supporting an alternative school which the children attend in the nearby village and have worked out an arrangement for cooperative child care amongst themselves for the preschoolers.

At New Covenant, outside Athens, we talked with Lyn and Jim Fitz in the large main building where they were having their noon meals. Though the community has at times been much larger and there is ample room for more, there are only two families currently living at New Covenant. The members do farming and construction work on the property and in the neighboring area. One of the women, Peggy Gish, is the teacher in the community's small school. She was preparing for the coming school year, organizing supplies and planning curriculum. Of the communities we visited, this was the most communal. Each family has a private cottage, but most meals are prepared and eaten communally and all income and expenses are shared. New Covenant is a Christian community and a member of the network of communities which Dave Jackson describes in his book, *COMING TOGETHER*. They, too, had a family visiting who were looking for a community.



We spoke with Roger Wilkens at Wild Turkey Hollow. He is particularly interested in strengthening and formalizing a network of cooperation between the various communities in the Athens area. He spoke of the need for a co-op organization to facilitate the marketing of community-produced crops and crafts such as the woodworking at Sunflower and the pottery at Wild Turkey Hollow. This is part of the long-range planning of the as-yet-unnamed community that is forming under Pete Hill's direction. Roger is in the process of forming a family "clump" which he hopes will become a part of that community.

Wild Turkey Hollow is at present more of a communal home than a community. They are in the process of building a second large house with the intention of adding more members in the future.

A flash flood and a tight schedule prevented us from keeping an appointment at another community in the area called Helpless Far. They are 16 people on 230 acres near Amesville.

Our last stop was at Deep Woods Farm, which is located further west near Ashe Cave and the town of Mount Pleasant. This is the project of David and Dorothy Blyth, Community Service members who had been with us at the Community Service conference this summer. They came from their home in Worthington, Ohio, to show us this property they have chosen for their community. They and two other families have purchased 310 acres of magnificent forested hills and valleys. So far there is only one small cabin and some preliminary excavation for a road and a house on the main property. The plan, however, is to begin construction this fall on homes for two families with one acre sites for an additional five or six. The size and the diversity of the property will allow for some agricultural development of the common land as well as the preservation of extensive areas of natural forest, including streams, waterfalls, rocky cliffs and caves.

The corporate structure of the community was selected to facilitate the sharing of the financial responsibilities as the community grows and to provide the necessary process in case a member family chooses to leave the community. The house construction will reflect the need for energy and materials conservation as well as providing a living space which will adjust to the needs of people, through the time of raising a family on to retirement and possible physical limitation. The intent here



is to create a community which will provide for the needs of members of a variety of ages, interests and abilities on a long term basis.

The most significant indicator of the vitality of these communities seemed to me to be the awareness of the on-going process of creating "community." Varying degrees of cooperation are needed and are being examined at each of the levels of community building--communal homes, communities of homes, networks of communities. These community efforts do not merely represent a back-to-the-land movement since there is relatively little attempt to derive their livelihood from the land. There is, however, an expressed and demonstrated concern for the sharing, co-operation and close relationships that comprise community.

Not all of the communities mentioned are ready to entertain visitors or to consider new members right now. Those that are open to enquiry are listed below and request that visitors write or call ahead to arrange a convenient time to visit.

Deep Woods Farms  
c/o David Blyth  
5580 Olentangy River Road  
Worthington, OH 43085

Sunflower Farm  
Rt. 1, Box 90  
Amesville, OH 45711

New Covenant  
Rt. 3, Box 218  
Athens, OH 45701

Helpless Far  
Rt. 1, Box 199  
Amesville, OH 45711





# Singing Waters Community

by Mary Tomlin

We thought we were starting something new!

Oh, we knew there were a few communes here and there, and had read of folk setting off to "live on the land together;" and we knew of Findhorn, of course, but that was in Scotland... Our association was to be founded upon ideals, specifically on the essential ideals of co-operation, faith and fellowship, which imply an attempt to live from the base of Christ-like love of fellow man, nature, God.

We've learned better by now; learned through several sources of the hundreds of communities everywhere, of all kinds, and the publications of Community Service have been the most enlightening of all. We've learned also that most of the existing communities, whether they state it out loud or not, have an implicitly spiritual goal of brotherhood, service and love. Nevertheless, at first we really did think we had a new idea. The fact is, without knowing it, we were responding to something "in the air," for community living is part of a genuine movement today. It seems to be a reaction to the ultra-materialism, the urbanitis, the hyper-individualism of the 20th century, and to its "self" orientation which has culminated in the downright selfishness and greed many of us today want to reverse in our own life style.

However, we do not see community as an escape. All who are born into a given era will be subject to at least part of the impact of the crises of his time. We do see community as a supportive mechanism to help members weather the storms and be better able to be of service through the crises.

But let's go back a bit in our story. It all happened as a magnificent default. We originally sent a son scouting for us down the Shenandoah Valley into North Carolina for a 10-acre farm. He reported: Farm prices are beyond our reach, if it is a going farm with solid house and barn. And he added: Virginians really don't seem to appreciate northerners trying to move in. So he went on into North Carolina, with very different findings: People warm and friendly, water runs out of the hills everywhere, going farms still expensive; will look at acreage. Finally, after one and a half years' searching through every possible channel,

snowbound, and reduced to just studying topographical maps, he picked out a valley which seemed to have all our requirements--ones we had set in the beginning: Clean water, hills on North to shield from winter winds, southern exposure for homesites, bottom land for agriculture, woods for firewood, access to macadam road. When the snow melted, he went to investigate, found it definitely measured up and that the owner had just days before passed on, making it available. And that land waited the entire two years it took us to sell our Connecticut home (remember the depression of '74?) despite several who had had eyes on it in the meantime. We felt "right" about it. But what on earth did two 67 year olds want with a 300 acre valley?! Gradually, then, the idea of a spiritually oriented, farming community was born. It wasn't really so far afield for a couple involved for fifteen years in the deeply Christ-oriented Edgar Cayce material, and for twelve of those years with commitment to spiritual growth through meditation groups. We had also become closely drawn to Quaker ideas. Both sources contributed to our thinking and our goals.



The rest of our understanding came from a rich melange of Organic Gardening, conclusions of the "Club of Rome" as to the future limitations on our vaunted economic system, Schumacher's "Small Is Beautiful," "Mother Earth," and our own hard look beginning 10-12 years ago at our wavering economy, the precariousness of our whole system of supply and the unfounded righteous assumptions of our science, industry and medicine. We wanted to get back to the land and felt others would eventually choose to join us. We also felt that those who have the strength and insight to uphold others when the foreseeable "future shock" becomes the present shock of financial/urban/geologic/ and economic (in the sense of supply) collapse, should somehow contrive to be the most useful they know how to be. That meant learning to be as independent as possible, in order to be helpful.

We plan five acre homesteads for some 20-25 families where folk can grow their own vegetables and fruits, keep chickens/goats/cow if

they choose. But we also envisage other large-scale, mutually agreed-upon community projects, whether for growing cash crops or developing energy supply, co-operative business(es), education, or the building of a Quiet Place to which individuals can retreat as they feel the need, or where those members of the community who wish to may foregather for silent worship.

Pie in the sky? Not really. Even we 70 year olds (by now) have cleared two acres and in just 3 years raised its fertility to food-growing condition, planted grape vines, berries, fruit trees, and started a small flock of chickens. Admittedly our home isn't finished, but we do a bit every year. We've tramped most of our acres, and have gotten a feel for their potential; found springs and laid out plans for water channels; have started clearing for future service roads; chosen the spot for future Community Center for crafts, centralized laundry and freezer. With just a few more hands and extra dollars wonders can be achieved in only a few years. So, financing all we envisage is a problem only if one lacks in faith. We believe that what is right for our Valley will be contributed for permanent improvement in Valley facilities for all, by each family drawn to it, according to the resources and the vision of each. A kind of tithing basis has been suggested as a helpful yardstick. Surely leaving it open is the New Age way, rather than massive borrowing to produce overnight a country version of suburban amenities, and rushing ahead with what could only be our own personal projection from present understanding. We feel this Valley should be developed by those who come, for their own needs and aspirations.

We spent many months hammering out our By-Laws and the formal Articles of Incorporation. Yet we continue to receive helpful input from interested persons. Our By-Laws will continue to grow, we surmise, according to the vision of those drawn here. They are based, first, on our fundamental ideals (co-operation, faith, fellowship) and subsequently on appropriate ancillary ones, such as ecologic concerns and consideration of one's neighbor. Rather basic these days. We've also set a pre-requisite of extensive visiting by all members of a family and of working together before acceptance into membership in our Association. Both parties should be very sure the "shoe" fits. One may have many and various kinds of friends, but rarely can one put them all into the same room. In any association, all will be in the same "room" and should evaluate carefully whether

they can work together smoothly and happily. Persons must be accepted into membership in the Association before purchasing a homestead.

Our structure is founded on the idea that independent families gathering together can become mutually supportive in daily life and bulwarks of strength in times of crisis. They can also become of greater service to others than single families working alone, in whatever way becomes needful in our area. It is also founded on the requirement of marriage, for, let's face it, dedication to the long term growth potential which a happy marriage evidences is proof of the capability of dedication to spiritual goals such as are the cornerstones of our Association. Free swinging partner changing, on the other hand, evidences to a basic irresponsibility which will erupt in other ways in any community. We've watched the life-style that is supposed to be "new," for many years and at close range, without observing anything but a series of fragmenting experiences as the result. "New" of course it is not; any historian knows it surfaces whenever allegiance to spiritual ideals dissipates. One can only ache for the broken hearts...

At present we are only two families, since one moved away. Why? Inadequately evaluated expectations, we feel. One must have the patience to work gradually towards material goals, as well as to wait on others' growing to the heights of which we all are capable. Eventually we will find such. Since publication in the July A.R.E. Journal of an article on Singing Waters we have had many inquiries, and there is the potential of several others through personal contacts. For any moved to inquire after reading this, we would ask a handwritten summary of background, skills and expectations. Though we shall welcome new members with open hearts, there is a limit to our available time to "visit and work with" applicants, and a certain winnowing must take place in view of our knowledge of the possibilities inherent in this Valley.

The skills referred to above are essential, though no one will have them all. There is animal husbandry and equipment mechanics; organic food raising and plumbing; carpentry, road building and woodmanship; food processing, herbal medicine, electricity and hydro-dynamics (for water power). One certainly can't come straight out of total energy/supermarket/drug store dependency and expect to make a go of self-sufficient homesteading. Settlers also need some cash for building a home, buying fertilizer, equipment and livestock, requires at

least some cash. The more money, the sooner a satisfying degree of achievement can be reached. Fortunately we are midway between two thriving towns where jobs can be found, so even that problem is partly solved here!

As anyone can see we're quite convinced of the potential for our Valley. Is it all a dream? In a way yes, for most of it will not come to pass until we're no longer here to see. Yet if even part of the cataclysmic changes in the earth, plus half the disintegration of cities and financial structures come to pass as forecast, in the next few years many endeavors such as our Valley community are going to be needed. Then our dream will have turned into a necessity. Meantime we shall continue working and planning here in the beautiful foothills of the Blue Ridge Mts. so that this Valley may fulfill the mission we foresee.

Singing Waters  
Rt. 1, Box 143  
Purlear, NC 28665



## Koinonia, Georgia

*The following article consists of excerpts from an article entitled "Clarence Jordan and Koinonia" by Joyce Hollyday which appeared in the December, 1979, issue of SOJOURNERS and from recent issues of the "Koinonia Newsletter."*

Clarence Jordan and Martin England, a former American Baptist missionary, found 440 acres of land in Sumter County, near Americus, Georgia. Beginning to formulate a vision for a Christian farming community that could be a resource for the rural poor, Clarence and the England family moved there in the fall of 1942.

They called this adventure Koinonia, from the Greek word which was used to identify the early church in Acts, which pooled its resources and shared the life of Jesus Christ in an atmosphere of reconciliation. This was the model for the fledgling farm.

The particular reconciliation that was so desperately needed at this time and place was between black and white. The Koinonians hired a

black man, a former sharecropper, to help with the farm. They all ate their meals together, and this breach of Southern tradition brought on the first hostility toward the community.

Despite the hostility of white neighbors, the farm soon became a success. Clarence invented a mobile peanut harvester and established a "cow library," through which poor neighbors could check out a cow for a period of time so that they could have milk.

Meanwhile, Clarence's reputation as a powerful, uncompromising preacher was growing. As he travelled the country preaching pacifism, social justice, and community, he drew young people to the experiment at Koinonia.

Some of the people who came to visit the farm stayed. By 1950 the community included 14 adults. They embarked on a year of struggle, marked by tension, mixed expectations, and disillusionment. Things moved slowly, every decision was labored, and community living was difficult.

In August, the small Rehoboth Baptist Church, where Florence Jordan had taught Sunday school and Clarence had led the singing and preached occasionally in the previous eight years, made a recommendation to reject them and the Koinonians were eventually excommunicated because of their racial views.

Florence relates, "In '54 came the Supreme Court decision on desegregation. And then the White Citizens' Council started up. They told us later that the one in Sumter County was formed with the express purpose of getting Koinonia out."

Clarence's aid to two black students in their application to a formerly segregated college in Atlanta was the spark that ignited the hostility. It began with threatening phone calls, grew to vandalism, and finally escalated into life-threatening violence.

The farm's roadside market was bombed several times and eventually destroyed. Nightriders sprayed machine-gun bullets at the houses. Fires were set on the property, more than 300 pecan trees were chopped down and crosses were burned on the lawns of black friends.

Several members of the community were called before a grand jury in the spring of 1957, the outcome of which was a report accusing Koinonia



of maintaining Communist ties and of self-inflicting the violence for attention and profit. The community was asked to leave the county.

"We got together and prayed and talked about it... We're not the first Christians who will have died for what we believe, and we won't be the last."

Sumter County residents bolstered their attack with the weapon of economics, hoping to choke the farm's livelihood, since they seemed unable to scare the Koinonians away.

"They formed a real solid boycott. One businessman told us that he was forced to sign at the point of a gun not to sell to us. We couldn't buy gas, fertilizer, or feed. We couldn't sell an egg. For about a year there we didn't make a living. If it had not been for our friends, who voluntarily gave to us, we couldn't have done it."

It was necessity that forced the community into the mail order pecan business during the boycott. The mail and the open pecan market were two things the local people could not control.

The adolescent community was saved from a premature death by the pecan business, but its membership and spirit were low. Clarence was gaining an ever-widening audience in the nation, yet back home the community seemed to lack spiritual leadership and unity. Finally only the Jordans and one other family remained, and they agreed that the experiment was over.

It was at this point, when the diagnosis seemed terminal, that new life grew out of the old scars. It came bursting forth in Clarence, in a unique and lasting gift to the Christian world, the "Cotton Patch" version of New Testament Scriptures. As Clarence clarified his thoughts on the incarnation, his desire to work out his beliefs was renewed.

In 1968, a man who brought boundless energy and a practical business sense arrived to help Clarence establish a new direction for Koinonia. Millard Fuller was a millionaire businessman-lawyer from Montgomery, Alabama. Both he and Clarence had a strong sense of God's leading in their deliberations: "We spent all day talking and praying. At the end, both of us were convinced that God had given a radically new direction to our lives."

Koinonia Partners and a Fund for Humanity grew out of that meeting. Housing was a large part of the "plan of action" of this new movement.

By 1978, four Habitat projects had been completed--two at Koinonia and two in Americus--providing good housing for 75 families. A fifth project was launched in late 1978 to build 12 more homes in Americus.

Because interest is a burden on the poor which they cannot afford to pay, the Fund for Humanity at each project site underwrites the building of the houses and sells them to people to be paid over a period of time without interest. The people are, however, encouraged to donate to the fund to help others, as others have contributed to help them.



Habitat for Humanity is primarily concerned with the building of simple but durable houses, but is also vitally involved in other ways of ministering to the total personhood of people, through distribution of eye glasses, artificial limbs, Christian literature and in the development of "backyard industries," gardens, clinics, community parks and programs in child care, health care, sewing and nutrition.

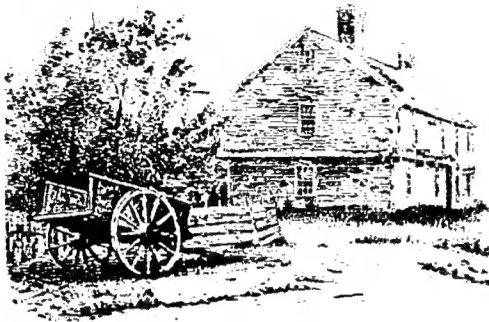
The farming partnership and other partnership industries have also gone through a long series of slowly evolving changes, many of which have been economically straining. New equipment and excellent partnership management in both farming and the pecan mail order business have this year brought an element of financial security to life there with all profits being returned to the fund.

While the pecan business, the farming, and housing construction are the major industries; handicrafts, pottery, solar-energy work, and a food co-op also consume the time of some of the local people and the community's 24 resident partners. A strong volunteer program keeps a

stream of about 50 new people flowing through the community each year, offering people an opportunity to live with them, participate in their fellowship and be part of the service of a Christian community.

Tax deductible contributions and non-interest loans continue to be needed and may be made to Habitat for Humanity, Inc., 419 West Church Street, Americus, Georgia 31709. For information about Koinonia products available by mail order, write Koinonia Partners, Rt. 2, Americus, Georgia 31709.

**THE COTTON PATCH EVIDENCE**, The Story of Clarence Jordan and the Koinonia Farm Experiment by Dallas Lee is available for \$5.95 plus 75¢ postage from Community Service, Box 243, Yellow Springs, OH 45387. Community Service also has Koinonia pecans for sale to people in the south-eastern Ohio area.



## Book Review

by Ariel Rubissow

**DECENTRALISM** by Mildred Loomis  
Available from Community Service, \$5.00, 205pp.

"Decentralists are making progress in their essential American fourth Revolution."

After three revolutions, the Revolution of Independence, the technological and Industrial Revolution and the civil revolution over slavery and unity, America is awakening to yet another. A scattered and slow revolution over central and immediate issues, decentralism provides alternatives to many aspects of western living today.

Mildred Loomis suggests that there has been centralization in seven specific areas of society:

1) production, 2) ownership, 3) control, 4) education, 5) government, 6) population and 7) communications. These centralizations are the manifestation of Absentee or Finance Capitalism. All of them are justified in the name of "Progress" and people identify progress with industrialism, expansion and affluence. Progress is one of the most cherished goals of Americans today. But as the author states:

"If modern progress is a good goal for which human beings should live, then as people industrialize, urbanize and centralize five results should lessen. There should be less restriction on decision making, less dependency, disease and degeneration, less delinquency and decadence. That these five D's are ever present and on the increase in modern society calls for a fourth revolution--a decentralist revolution."

The book is well-written and informative record of the activities, experiences and ideas of decentralists throughout recent history. The tone and quality of the book are refreshing, largely due to Mildred Loomis's own closeness to the people and ideas she describes through her long association with Ralph Borsodi and the School of Living.

The chapters of Decentralism range through all its issues from discussions of Henry George and the elimination of land monopoly, of Agnes Toms and Whole Foods, of Ralph Borsodi and Constant Currency, of Ken Kern and owner-built homes through Rural Revival, homesteading, cooperatives, mutual credit unions, organic farming, appropriate technology and Mildred Loomis's own experiences at Lanes End homestead near Dayton, Ohio.

The book emphasizes the ways in which decentralist economics, politics and social ethics can save us from the ills of American style consumerism and capitalism. As the author summarizes:

"When cultural affairs are operating on three principles--harmony with nature, removing land and money-monopoly, and people-control in small groups--then voluntary action replaces coercion, and then 'the State will wither away.' When land is free or available at low cost, when money is stable and credit inexpensive, each individual in the free market will receive what he has earned, none will have what he did not produce and all persons can follow their inclination for a lifeway."

## Readers Write

*Margot Ensign, long time secretary to Arthur Morgan, moved with her husband, David, from Yellow Springs to California over a year ago. Margot wrote recently giving their new address. It is Box 215, Empire, CA 95319. After visiting friends and family in the east, she wrote in August saying, "We finally arrived at Empire July 1st after a long and most interesting journey. We are feeling very much at home here already, for everyone has been so friendly, helpful and welcoming... For me, I think the high point of the whole trip was camping on the coast at Patrick's Point State Park where there is a "rim trail" for several miles along the top of the rocky cliffs. From here we could see gray whales blowing and spouting, flipping their tails, heaving their great barnacle-covered backs through the waves, only 200 yards out from the beach. A wonderful sight."*

Margot Ensign, California

I want to express my deepest thanks for your hospitality, generosity and sharing of yourselves, the Vale and Community Service with me.

I found my stay with you productive, inspiring, positive and peaceful. The Vale gave me a sense of tranquility and reflection that I hadn't had all summer.

Ariel Rubissow, Connecticut

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We not only welcome letters to the editor, but articles about any exceptional communities you know of or people who are doing unusual things to improve the life in their towns. Anyone submitting an article should enclose a self-addressed envelope if he/she wishes it returned if we cannot use it. The only recompense for use we can offer is the pleasure of seeing it in print and knowing that you have spread a good and useful idea.

### DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND?

Do you have a friend who might be interested in Community Service's work and publications? One of the most helpful ways of supporting CS is to send the names and addresses of friends who you think should receive a sample of our NEWSLETTER and a copy of our booklist. If you wish a specific issue of our NEWSLETTER sent to your friends, please send 15¢ postage per name.

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### CONSULTATION

Community Service makes no set charge for consultation services formal or informal, but can only serve through contributions of its friends and those it helps. For consultation we suggest a minimum contribution equal to that of the consulter's hourly wage for an hour of our time.

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